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GIFTS AND HELP TO OUR JAWANS

In the last two months plus while going around the country I have been asked by many kind people, men and women, in what shape gifts can be sent for our Jawans in the forward areas and what other help could be rendered to them and their dependents. I have been impressed with the terrific urge shown by our people of their desire to cheer up our officers and men who are defending our country in this hour of national emergency. I saw no evidence of any dearth of this enthusiasm anywhere. I as an old soldier, am most grateful to our people for this love and affection they are showing for our grand officers and men.

I have seen scores and scores of our women folk of all classes spending hours and days knitting woollen garments, making them pickles, sweets and so on, collecting blankets, warm clothing and such like essential requirements for our Jawans fighting in inhospitable, cold places on our frontiers. Local military commanders are being handed over parcels and parcels of these gifts to be sent to the front. I have also found that these gifts are being sent in bits and pieces not properly packed nor properly secured to help their arrival at their destinations intact. So, I am telling you, our kind people, what you can do, and in what manner, to bring happiness to our chaps at the front.

The urgent need, of course, is woollen clothing - woollen socks, gloves, balaclava caps, pullovers, blankets and quilted jackets. These must, of course, all be new material and not mere used ones collected by our willing and charming ladies who go about every nook and corner of our cities collecting them from kind hearted people. Old clothes ~~are not normally desirable — infact, they~~ are not acceptable - but used warm blankets, perhaps, would be useful. In this case they have got to be properly disinfected before they are handed over to the Army authorities, or such other authorities who collect them. The knitted garments would have to be in some Service colour such as olive green, khaki or brown. As for eatables such as pickles, sweets, gulab Jamoons,

rasoogolas and so on, I think the Jawans would prefer nice hot pickles and confectionary and chocolates in tins or packets. I know sitting on the heights of LADAKH or in forward areas in NEFA, they would like small packets of Indian sweets, but it would not be possible to have these packed properly to ensure of their not getting damaged or spoilt. Anyhow, whatever food is sent it is essential that the donors should give to the local authorities to whom they hand over these gifts a "certificate" signed by some responsible medical authority to say that the food had been tested and found safe. Troops would also like tea, coffee, cocoa and horlicks.

There are other ways to help. You can send them bundles of pictorial papers and local newspapers in the language of the troops. Inexpensive story books would also be appreciated. Writing pads with envelopes and postcards would be most welcome. Envelopes and postcards should not have any stamps. Khaki and green handkerchiefs, small towels and cigarettes could all be sent but all these must be securely and properly packed to see that they do not get damaged in transit. Small 'Radio' and Transistor sets are in great demand by our troops.

There are many other ways in which the Jawans could be kept cheered up, indirectly, and some of these are:-

1) Social Welfare Workers could visit the homes of our Jawans and find out what help can be given to their dependents, particularly their wives and children. The wives may require hospitalization or some medical comfort as also their children. Children's education could be looked after. Local doctors could visit their homes periodically to offer any medical aid.

2) This is a most important matter and that is any pending legal cases of officers or Jawans. After all, they are also people of our country and like other people they also have some legal problems. If local law experts can offer their services honorarily to the dependents of officers and men and get through their cases speedily, it would be a great morale raiser to our chaps in the forward areas. Government officers

dealing with these matters could persuade the parties concerned to withdraw their cases etc., in favour of the Jawans. It may be possible for money lenders who have given loans to officers and men and who in return may have had their properties mortgaged, to have the loans written off, unless, of course, such loans are substantial sums in which case considerable reductions in repayments could be made.

3) Women workers could visit the homes of the families of our troops say once a week or so and write letters on their behalf to their husbands and so on.

4) Free education to the children of our troops upto certain standards would be most welcome.

5) All India Radio from every station throughout India could arrange a programme every day, say for half an hour or so, getting families of troops to send out short messages to their husbands, sons etc., over the air. Some responsible person such as the President of the Local Panchyat Board, or of some such organisation, could give short talks about conditions in the villages from where the troops come.

6) Grown up daughters and sons of the troops can be offered jobs suitable to their qualifications without their having to go through the usual channels of red tapism.

7) Payment of monthly remittances and pensions to families regularly are a must.

8) The looking after of the land of those at the "front" by local social welfare organisations would be a help.

These are some of the many ways in which the people can help to ep up the high morale of our brave officers and men in the forward areas, fact, anywhere in the country, because troops are moved about from place place at short notice necessitating their leaving behind their families temporary residences. Incidentally, one of the big problems of ficers is accommodation for their families when they go to fight.

Here, every possible consideration might be shown to such families to continue to occupy their flats or houses.

I hope what I have told you so far has given you some idea of the manner in which you can help our grand officers and men of the Defence Services in this hour of National Emergency.